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SUBJECT: TURKEY'S AFGHANISTAN SUMMIT EMPHASIZES REGIONAL
COOPERATION

REF: 09 ANKARA 1661

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: In an effort to showcase the role of Afghanistan's neighbors in advance of the January 28 London Conference on Afghanistan, Turkey's President Gul hosted a Summit on Afghanistan and its contiguous neighbors on January 26, 2010. Participants included Afghan President Karzai, Pakistan President Zardari, Iranian First Vice President Rahimi, UK Foreign Secretary Miliband, and Chinese Foreign Minister Yang, as well foreign ministers from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Observers included Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Borodavkin and senior representatives from the United States, Saudi Arabia, UAE, France, Germany, NATO, the EU, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and UNAMA. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan did not attend, while Turkey agreed to exclude India at the request of Pakistan, in part because the genesis for the conference was a Turkey-Pakistan-Afghanistan Trilateral Summit in 2009.

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY CONTINUED: The conference demonstrated both the region's interest in supporting Afghanistan and the regional tensions that contribute to instability in Afghanistan. We and Turkey succeeded in avoiding the creation of new regional structures that could exclude some countries from what needs to be a broad regional effort to reduce tensions and stabilize Afghanistan. Every delegation emphasized that regional cooperation was necessary to stabilize Afghanistan. Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Paul Jones, who led the U.S. delegation, offered principles for expanded regional cooperation, emphasizing that all of Afghanistan's neighbors have a legitimate and important role to play in stabilizing Afghanistan and that all countries' actions should reinforce and respect Afghanistan's sovereignty. Jones joined other delegations' calls for greater transparency and flexible cooperation on issues such as counter terrorism, trade, energy, and counternarcotics. He emphasized that no country should use its position in Afghanistan against others. Jones also held several bilateral meetings with heads of other delegations (septel). More broadly, the conference offered Turkey another opportunity to take a leading role in regional efforts to support Afghanistan, and ended with the presentation of a joint statement indentifying future areas for regional cooperation, mainly in the areas of culture and training. END SUMMARY.

¶3. (U) Originally planned for February or March 2010, this summit on "Friendship and Cooperation in the Heart of Asia" was rescheduled to precede the London Conference on January 28. The idea for the Summit emerged from Turkey's trilateral meetings with Afghanistan and Pakistan. Turkey's President Abdullah Gul opened the summit, emphasizing the cultural, religious, and historic ties between Afghanistan, its neighbors, and countries in the region. He stressed that extremism could not be overcome by military power alone and said the basic tenet of the region's Afghanistan policy should be winning the hearts and minds of the people. President Gul stressed

the need for regional assistance to Afghanistan in the areas of energy, trade and private sector development, and in countering extremism, drug trade, organized crime, and human trafficking. He called on all attending to support President Karzai's agenda, as outlined in his November 2009 inaugural address. Finally, Gul emphasized that Turkey did not intend to create an exclusive format for regional cooperation, but wanted to complement existing mechanisms.

¶4. (U) Afghan President Hamid Karzai emphasized that cultural connections among Afghanistan's neighbors would help build and sustain cooperation. While noting the important contributions the international community is making to Afghan stability, he said regional cooperation is most important for stabilizing Afghanistan. Karzai noted that economic infrastructure in the region is lacking and highlighted the importance of transit links and the need for increased cooperation in trade, energy, investment, and environmental protection, to integrate Afghanistan into the region.

¶5. (U) Pakistani President Zardari's remarks focused on Pakistan's struggle against terrorism and the need for increased dialogue among neighbors. Zardari was pessimistic that extremists would be easily defeated, opining that the problem would not be solved in his generation, but said he was committed to leading Pakistan to a better future.

¶6. (U) Iran's First Vice President Mohammed Reza Rahimi repeatedly voiced his support for regional meetings aimed at reaching agreements to facilitate sustainable social and political stability in Afghanistan. He noted that Iran has allocated a large percentage of its budget for assistance

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along its border with Afghanistan in the areas of roads, water, electricity, border markets. The three main areas of development Iran focuses on in Afghanistan are: infrastructure, training/technical services, and goods and commodities. Tehran also encourages Iranian companies to invest in Afghanistan. While he opined that foreign forces in Afghanistan and civilian casualties have exacerbated Afghanistan's problems and called for a timetable for withdrawal of foreign forces, his comments were generally even-keeled and constructive. He emphasized that the only sustainable solution for Afghan stability is regional cooperation.

¶7. (SBU) Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi made a proactive, forward-leaning statement. Yang called for all countries to support and aid the Afghan government in reconstruction and economic development. He highlighted the themes of sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference, and the importance of regional cooperation. He noted that China has canceled all of Afghanistan's debts since 2002, has trained over 500 government officials, built hospitals and power and irrigation projects, turned concessionary loans into grant assistance, and has plans for more projects and training. Yang listed four aspects China feels are important with regard to work with Afghanistan: 1) Neighbors should use their specific advantages, links and influence to support Afghanistan; 2) Afghanistan should be integrated into the international community and respected as an independent country; 3) Aid and assistance should be more focused and coordinated to avoid overlapping and wasting resources; 4) We should all be open with our assistance and promote interaction between countries, and respect the leading role of the UN to organize efforts. (COMMENT: Yang's statement reflected many of the priorities the United States has emphasized with the Chinese in recent months and evidences an evolution in Chinese thinking on Afghanistan over the past year.)

¶8. (U) Tajik Foreign Minister Hamrohon Zarifi said Tajikistan suffers from the instability originating in Afghanistan, and said supporting improved border security a priority. Zarifi said he believes the most important

solution is putting strength in the hands of the Afghan people and supporting their self-empowerment. He highlighted the importance of transit and energy cooperation, particularly regional cooperation on highway and railroad infrastructure, as well as possible development of natural gas pipelines and power plants.

¶9. (U) Saudi Arabia's State Minister Nizar Madani pledged continuing support for Afghanistan and expressed his belief that an inclusive political solution bringing together all Afghan people is essential. UAE State Minister Anwar Garagash called for further involvement of Muslim countries in Afghanistan.

¶10. (U) Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Alexey Borodavkin spoke mainly on counternarcotics, and Russia's successes in working with Afghanistan on countering drug trafficking. He reminded the audience that extremism is funded by the drug trade. He said Russia feels all the Afghan-related cooperative mechanisms and summits are important and should not be seen as competitive, but as complementary to benefit Afghanistan. He also noted that Russia will increase training of Afghan officials and is prepared to provide additional material assistance.

¶11. (U) OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu appreciated the summit as a chance for countries to come together for peace and security, and said the OIC supports regional cooperation and coordination. He announced the OIC will soon organize a scholars/religious leaders conference in Kabul on the topic of radical interpretations of Islam and promoting tolerance, to contribute to national reconciliation, which the OIC supports.

¶12. (U) While observers, including the United States, did not play a role in shaping the final summit statement, it reinforced many of the principles that Deputy SRAP Jones articulated. Specifically, the statement outlined a "shared vision" of regional peace and stability and the importance of coordinated action and regional cooperation in trade and transit, transport and energy. It also outlined "principles of cooperation" including supporting the Afghan government and the Afghan national process of reconciliation and reintegration. The statement also lists agreements to: establish a "minds platform" to bring together academics, media and think tanks, to be hosted in Turkey in 2010; developing regional capacity-building programs; natural disaster response simulation activities; job creation and infrastructure building projects; presenting joint cultural

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exhibitions; and suggests annual meetings of Afghanistan's neighbors "as appropriate."

¶13. (U) D/SRAP Paul Jones cleared this cable.
Jeffrey

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